WILDC.A.T.S

COVERT-ACTION-TEAM

™

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MAR

J'MLEE
WILLIAMS

WILDC.A.T.S™

COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS

NUMBER NINE

COVER BY JIM LEE & SCOTT WILLIAMS
WILDC.A.T.S CREATED BY JIM LEE & BRANDON CHOI

"PAST TIME"

STORY: BRANDON CHOI & JIM LEE
PENCILS: JIM LEE
INKS: SCOTT WILLIAMS
LETTERS: RICHARD STARKINGS/ COMICRAFT

"THE BONDS OF BLOOD & STEEL"

STORY: JEFF MARIOTTE
PENCILS: TRAVIS CHAREST
INKS: ALEX GARNER/PG.9
RAY McCARTHY/PG.3
MARK McKENNA/PG.1,2,6,7
TREVOR SCOTT/PG.8
AL VEY/PG.4,5
LETTERS: BILL OAKLEY

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COMICRAFT IS JOHN GAUSHELL AND BILL O'NEIL

WELCOME TO THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE.

OVER THE PAST CENTURY, A VARIETY OF SEA-GOING VESSELS, RANGING FROM THE BRIGANTINE, **MARY CELESTE** IN 1872, TO THE FIVE AVENGER TORPEDO BOMBERS OF FLIGHT 19 IN 1945, HAVE MYSTERIOUSLY **DISAPPEARED** IN THESE SEEMINGLY TRANQUIL WATERS OFF THE SHORE OF BERMUDA.

HOWEVER, ON THIS PARTICULAR DAY, THE WILDC.A.T.S -- **ZEALOT, MAUL** AND **WARBLADE** -- ACCOMPANIED BY **JACOB MARLOWE'S** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, **JULES NEWBERRY**, HAVE COME TO THIS WATERY TWILIGHT ZONE DETERMINED TO FIND THEIR LOST LEADER, AS WELL AS THEIR FELLOW TEAMMATES, **SPARTAN** AND **VOODOO**.

THIS IS A WASTE OF *TIME*, ZEALOT. THERE'S *NOTHING* DOWN THERE. WE'VE ALREADY BEEN OVER THIS QUADRANT *TWICE*.

THEN WE'LL DO IT *AGAIN*, WARBLADE!

WE MUST BE OVERLOOKING SOMETHING. I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT AN ENTIRE OCEAN LINER WITH ITS PASSENGERS AND CREW CAN SIMPLY *DISAPPEAR* WITHOUT A TRACE.

WHOOOOSH

IN A LITTLE WHILE, YOU WON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE.

WHAT'S OUR FUEL STATUS, JULES?

BAD AND GETTING WORSE.

IN ANOTHER HALF HOUR, WE'LL HAVE TO *GLIDE* INTO MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON FUMES... IF WE'RE *LUCKY*.

OH, THAT'S WONDERFUL... JUST WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE -- A *TOURIST* IN *FLORIDA*...

"...I ONLY HOPE VOODOO, SPARTAN, AND EMP ARE BETTER OFF THAN *WE* ARE."

IN FACT, THE SITUATION COULDN'T BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH, AT LEAST FOR SPARTAN AND VOODOO.

THE PLEASANT MEMORY OF THEIR SHORT TIME SPENT TOGETHER ABOARD THE CARRIBBEAN PRINCESS HAS BEEN REPLACED BY THE NIGHTMARE OF FIGHTING FOR THEIR VERY LIVES AGAINST A BLOODTHIRSTY HORDE OF DAEMONITES!.

WE'VE *GOT* TO KEEP MOVING, *VOODOO!* DON'T GIVE UP *NOW!* IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF *TIME* BEFORE THE OTHERS GET HERE.

IT -- IT'S *NO USE*, SPARTAN! WE'VE BEEN ON THE RUN FOR DAYS. THERE ARE *DAEMONITES* EVERYWHERE! *NO WAY OUT!*

STOP TALKING LIKE THAT! WE CAN *BEAT* THEM IF WE WORK TOGETHER.

MY *BIO-BLASTS* ARE KEEPING THEM AT BAY, BUT I NEED YOU TO USE *THE SIGHT* TO TRY AND GET PSIONIC CONTROL OVER THEM.

C-CAN'T CONCENTRATE, HADRIAN! JUST -- TOO AFRAID! CAN'T FOCUS! I'M SORRY, HADRIAN...BUT I'M ONLY... HUMAN...

SHRAKOW

IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'LL FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE!

THERE IS *NO ESCAPE* FOR YOU OR THE FEMALE HYBRID, MECHANOID! EVEN NOW, YOU ARE *WEAKENING.*

WE HAVE THE UPPER HAND!

SHLACK

AS WELL AS ONE OF YOUR OWN!

NO! THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR A DAEMONITE... TO MOVE SO QUICKLY!

SKRUNCH

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT, MECHANOID.

BUT ENOUGH OF THIS GAME. LET US GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER -- YOUR IMPENDING DEATHS!

STAY BACK! DO YOU HEAR?! KEEP AWAY FROM ME!

HADRIAN! PLEASE -- HELP ME!

RUN, PRIS! GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE IT'S TOO --

AAAIIEEE--

SKRUNCH

PRIS?

PRIS!!

YOU'RE TOO LATE, MECHANOID.

THE FEMALE IS *DEAD!*

NNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOO!

FASCINATING! A CYBERNETIC ENTITY THAT ACTUALLY POSSESSES THE CAPACITY TO MANIFEST EMOTIONS!

THIS MERITS FURTHER INVESTIGATION!

YOU *MONSTER!* WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO HIM?!

LEAVE HIM ALONE -- HE'S DONE *NOTHING* TO YOU!

PRIS?! YOU'RE *ALIVE?* WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO ME?

YOU WERE MERELY AN *EXAMPLE* FOR THE OTHERS, MECHANOID! A DEMONSTRATION OF MY ABILITIES!

I WIELD THE POWER TO ALTER THE VERY *FABRIC* OF REALITY, AND IN YOUR CASE, SPARTAN, TO MANIPULATE THE CERTAINTIES OF YOUR INFALLIBLE COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY.

A NEUROTRONIC BRAIN CRASHING IS NOT A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE, EVEN FOR AN OBSERVER.

STOP IT, ENROPY! IT'S *ME* YOU WANT.

Ahhhh, SO THE *TRAITOR* SPEAKS AT LAST!

HAVE YOU COME TO ACCEPT THE JUDGMENT PLACED AGAINST YOU?

LISTEN UP, BUDDY!

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU WANT, BUT IF YOUR GRUDGE IS WITH *ME*, THEN LEAVE *THEM* OUT OF IT.

YOU *DARE* MOCK ME?!

NO! THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING!

I REALLY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE *TALKING* ABOUT!

SURELY YOU *JEST*, LORD EMP. HAVE YOU *FORGOTTEN* YOUR FOUL DEEDS SO QUICKLY?

IT WAS BARELY A *MILLENNIUM* AGO THAT YOU BETRAYED ME, AND I REMEMBER IT AS IF IT WERE *YESTERDAY.*

WE WERE COMRADES-IN-ARMS THEN, NOBLE KHERUBIM KNIGHTS ON A MISSION TO RID THE WORLD OF THE EVILS THAT TORE IT ASUNDER --

-- EVILS THAT TOOK MANY FORMS...

POWER!

AT *LAST*, *MINE* IS THE POWER TO *RULE* THIS LAND, TO *CRUSH* IT BENEATH MY HEEL --

-- FOR WITH THIS *MYSTIC SWORD*, *NONE* CAN STAND AGAINST *BRANNOCH THE DARK!*

AS YOUR HUSBAND, THE HIGH-AND-MIGHTY *LORD ENTROPY*, SHALL SHORTLY *LEARN*, WOMAN.

YES, EVEN NOW, HE AND HIS CHURLISH FRIEND, EMP, MARCH THEIR FORCES TO MY DOORSTEP. THEY THINK TO WIN YOUR *RESCUE*, FAIR GWYNITH --

"-- BUT THEY WILL FIND ONLY *DEATH!*"

BEGIN THE SIEGE!

I WILL HAVE MY WIFE RETURNED TO ME SAFELY, LORD EMP, AND BRANNOCH WILL *RUE* THE DAY HE TOOK UP SWORD AGAINST HIS!

NO DOUBT OUR FORCES CAN TAKE THE CASTLE, LORD ENTROPY, BUT WE MUST BE ON GUARD AGAINST THE DARK POWERS OF THE *SWORD* --

"-- IT'S ORIGINS ARE AS *OTHERWORLDLY* AS OUR OWN, AND I FEAR IT MAY BE A MATCH FOR EVEN OUR KHERUBIM POWERS."

THE *SWORD*, ENTROPY!

BRANNOCH'S SOMEHOW USING IT TO DRAIN THE *LIFE-FORCE* FROM OUR MEN. WE *MUST* GET THE ACCURSED BLADE, OR SURELY ALL WILL BE LOST!

VRRMMM

I'M *COMING* FOR YOU, ENTROPY -- YOUR *DOOM* DRAWS NEAR!

SCAAASH

THWK

FEAR NOT, EMP! WITHOUT *BRANNOCH*, THE SWORD POSES LITTLE DANGER --

-- AND THE USURPER'S LIFE WAS *FORFEIT* THE DAY HE DARED KIDNAP MY WIFE.

HE MAY BE A DEADLY FOE WHILE WIELDING THAT ELDRITCH BLADE --

NOW *DIE*, ENTROPY -- *DIE!*

KRACK

-- BUT HE DOESN'T STAND A *CHANCE* AGAINST A TRUE LORD OF THE KHERUBIM!

AAARGH!

LADY GWYNITH, MY LOVE, I'VE COME TO SET YOU FREE AT LAST.

MY HUSBAND, I NEVER DOUBTED THAT YOU AND THE LORD EMP WOULD SAVE ME FROM BRANNOCH'S EVIL CLUTCHES.

IT WAS TRULY A VICTORY FOR THE AGES.

WITH THE DARK ONE DEFEATED AND MY WIFE ONCE MORE AT MY SIDE, WE WERE ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW AND GLORIOUS EPOCH OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

DO YOU REMEMBER NOW, MURDERER?

THE BETRAYAL AT MY MOMENT OF TRIUMPH THAT STRIPPED ME OF EVERYTHING THAT I HELD DEAR IN THIS WORLD?

INTERESTING STORY, BUT IT DOESN'T RING A BELL.

LET'S JUST CUT TO THE CHASE, OKAY? THE ONLY PAST *I* CAN REMEMBER IS THE LAST FOUR YEARS.

I DON'T RECALL A SINGLE DAY OF MY LIFE BEFORE THAT MORNING I WOKE UP GETTING BEATEN TO A PULP IN A NEW YORK ALLEYWAY BACK IN 1990.

ANYWAY, THE NEXT THING I KNEW, THIS WOMAN SAVED MY LIFE AND TOLD ME I'M THIS LORD KHERUBIM, PROTECTOR OF ALL MANKIND.

I SAID, *"SURE, WHY NOT, IT COULD HAPPEN,"* AND I WENT OFF WITH HER, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I ACTUALLY UNDERSTAND ANY OF IT.

MAYBE IT ***WAS*** ME ALL THOSE YEARS AGO WHO DOUBLE-CROSSED YOU, MAYBE IT ***WASN'T***. I'M JUST TELLING YOU THAT I HONESTLY DON'T REMEMBER.

THAT'S QUITE A TALE YOU'VE WEAVED FOR YOURSELF, LORD EMP.

BUT EVEN *IGNORANCE* SHALL BE NO SALVATION.

I'LL SIMPLY ***MAKE*** YOU REMEMBER.

VRRRMMM

VRRRmmm

THOUGH YOU MAY COME TO WISH IT WEREN'T SO.

YEEEARRGH!

NEW YORK CITY.

HALO CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS.

IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN, STANSFIELD.

WHAT IS THAT, MS. TERESH-KOVA?

SOMEONE IS USING AN ORB TO MANIPULATE THE QUANTUM ENERGY FIELD.

IT IS MOST LIKELY THE SAME ENTITY WHO FIRST USED THE POWER OF THE ORB TO ATTACK LORD EMP AND THE OTHERS ABOARD THE CARIBBEAN PRINCESS.

I MUST TRY TO LOCATE THE ORIGIN OF THIS POWER DISTORTION.

BUT WON'T YOU BE EXPOSING YOURSELF ONCE MORE TO THE TERRIBLE AFTERSHOCKS THAT STRUCK YOU DOWN WHEN MISTER MARLOWE'S SHIP WAS FIRST ATTACKED?

NO. THE FIRST DISTORTION CAUGHT ME UNAWARE. THIS TIME I WILL BE PREPARED.

AND WITHOUT MY AID, THE WILDC.A.T.S WILL SURELY FAIL IN THEIR MISSION TO RESCUE OUR COMRADES.

IS IT PRUDENT TO GO IN YOUR WEAKENED STATE, MS. TERESHKOVA? I WOULD HAVE TO ADVISE AGAINST SUCH A COURSE OF ACT--

YOU ARE NOT THE LEADER OF THIS TEAM, STANSFIELD, AND IT IS NOT YOUR DECISION TO MAKE.

IT IS MY OWN.

MADAM -- WAIT!

VNNNNN

"I DO HOPE THE YOUNG LADY KNOWS WHAT SHE'S DOING!"

VNNN

WHOA! *VOID?!* WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE? THEY SAID YOU WERE OUT OF COMMISSION.

THOUGH THE ATTACK WEAKENED ME, JEREMY, I AM FAR FROM BEING HELPLESS.

IN FACT, I BELIEVE I KNOW HOW TO FIND OUR MISSING FRIENDS.

WE'VE BEEN AT IT FOR HOURS, VOID, AND HAVEN'T FOUND A SINGLE CLUE.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW THAT WE DON'T?

I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SHIP.

AFTER THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ISLAND ANGEL, I MONITORED THE CARIBBEAN PRINCESS DURING ITS VOYAGE.

WHEN IT WAS ATTACKED, I REGISTERED THE PRESENCE OF A POWERFUL ENTITY MANIPULATING THE QUANTUM ENERGY FIELD IN ORDER TO DIMENSIONALLY WARP THE SHIP THROUGH SPACE AND TIME.

VNNNN

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF POWER IT WOULD TAKE TO ACCOMPLISH --

SUCH AN INCREDIBLE FEAT WOULD REQUIRE THE COSMIC ENERGIES FOUND ONLY WITHIN THE *ORBS OF POWER.*

SO HOW EXACTLY DO *YOU* KNOW ALL THIS?

BECAUSE I AM THE INCARNATION OF ONE SUCH ORB.

IN THE FUTURE, A GREAT WAR WAS FOUGHT BETWEEN THE FORCES OF GOOD AND EVIL. IN THE FINAL BATTLE, THE CHAMPION OF LIGHT, ***OMNIA***, WAS DEFEATED AND HER LIFE FORCE WAS SHATTERED, WITH SHARDS OF HER ESSENCE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE SPACE- TIME CONTINUUM.

OVER THE MILLENNIA, MANY OF THEM HAVE REAPPEARED ON EARTH IN THE FORM OF SHOOTING STARS. UPON IMPACT, THE SHARDS OFTEN TOOK THE FORM OF A GLOWING STONE, AN ***ORB***, WITH EACH ONE POSSESSING A UNIQUE ASPECT OF THE DISEMBODIED WHOLE.

THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF HISTORY, A NUMBER OF THESE POWERFUL ORBS WERE DISCOVERED, AND WHILE SOME HUMANS UTILIZED THEM FOR ***GOOD***...

...OTHERS USED THE ORBS FOR ***EVIL***.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1980, ONE SHARD STRUCK THE SOVIET *MIR* SPACE STATION, ***PUSTOTA***. THE SPACECRAFT EXPLODED UPON IMPACT. WHILE I SHOULD HAVE DIED ALONG WITH MY FELLOW COSMONAUTS ON THAT DAY...

...I WAS SPARED WHEN THE ESSENCE OF THE ORB BONDED WITH MY HUMAN ENTITY, MAJOR *ADRIANNA TERESHKOVA*.

I DON'T SEE HOW YOUR BONDING WITH THIS ***ORB*** IS GOING TO HELP US FIND THE OTHERS --

BECAUSE OF THEIR COMMON ORIGIN, ALL THE ORBS ARE ATTUNED TO EACH OTHERS' PRESENCE.

REMEMBERING MY PAST ENCOUNTER WITH THIS PARTICULAR ORB, I CAN TRACK DOWN THE LOCATION OF IT BY FOCUSING UPON ITS UNIQUE ENERGY SIGNATURE.

I'VE FED THE PROPER COORDINATES INTO THE *MII-V'S* NAVIGATION SYSTEMS. WE SHOULD BE THERE SOON.

BUT WE'VE ALREADY SEARCHED THAT SECTOR, VOID.

YOU MUST LEARN TO THINK IN AT LEAST ***THREE*** DIMENSIONS, WARBLADE. WHILE THE SHIP MAY NOT BE ***BELOW***...

...IT COULD VERY WELL BE FLOATING ***ABOVE*** YOU!

WHY ISN'T IT SHOWING UP ON OUR ***RADAR***, JEREMY?

SENSORS INDICATE THAT THE STRUCTURE HAS NO ***ECHO REFLECTION***, RENO.

THE ENTIRE PLACE MUST BE COMPOSED OF SOME ADVANCED RADAR ABSORBENT MATERIAL IT'S LIKE A GHOST.

THE ONLY PROBLEM NOW IS, I DON'T SEE A ***FRONT DOOR*** ANYWHERE.

JULES, THERE'S SOME KIND OF AIRDUCT AT THE BASE OF THE STRUCTURE. SEE IF YOU CAN GET US IN THERE.

GOT IT, ZEALOT.

WELL, GUYS, LET'S JUST HOPE OUR OWN STEALTH TECHNOLOGY WORKS, OR WE'RE GOING TO END UP ON THE NEXT EPISODE OF ***UNSOLVED MYSTERIES.***

WITHIN THE SHIP...

BY HECATE! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

IT APPEARS AS THOUGH THE STRUCTURE IS SOME SORT OF ***LIVING ORGANISM!***

GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

THEN YOU'RE GOING TO ***REALLY*** LIKE THIS, WARBLADE.

WHAT DID YOU FIND?

I THINK IT'S SOME OF THE PASSENGERS FROM THE OCEAN LINERS. THEY SEEM TO BE IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION, WITH THESE WEIRD CRYSTALS GROWING OVER THEM.

IT LOOKS LIKE WE GOT HERE JUST IN TIME. IN ANOTHER COUPLE OF HOURS, THEY'D HAVE BEEN ***COMPLETELY*** COVERED.

AT LEAST THIS MEANS WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

ELSEWHERE --

NOW I REMEMBER! YOU DIDN'T BOTHER *FINISHING* YOUR LITTLE STORY, *DID* YOU, ENTROPY?

YOU LEFT OUT THE PART WHERE YOU JUST *STOOD BY* AS A DAEMONITE EMERGED FROM BRANNOCH'S BODY--

HUMAN VESSEL...NO LONGER... INHABITABLE! MUST FIND... ANOTHER! YES-- THE FEMALE...

--AND TOOK POSSESSION OF YOUR WIFE!

...SHOULD BE *PERFECT!*

AND NOW, I SHALL DESTROY MY ENEMIES ONCE AND FOR ALL!

WRRK

VRRMMM

MILADY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

LISTEN TO ME, ENTROPY! THAT'S NOT YOUR WIFE!

PAY NO HEED TO HIM, MY LOVE. FIGHT *WITH* ME, AND TOGETHER WE CAN *RULE* THE LAND AND PURGE THIS DISEASE CALLED HUMANITY FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET.

JOIN ME, MY HUSBAND!

VRAAAMMM

YE...YES, GWYNITH. TOGETHER...

ENTROPY, YOU FOOL!

YOU MUST DESTROY THE MONSTER BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

I... CANNOT...

THE DEMON HAS ENTHRALLED LORD ENTROPY! WE MUST DESTROY IT OURSELVES!

YEEAAGH! AAARRGH!

VRAMM

ALL YOU SHALL DO IS DIE!

ONLY THE DEATH CRIES OF YOUR OWN SOLDIERS BROUGHT YOU BACK TO YOUR SENSES.

GWYNITH! STOP THIS MADNESS! THOSE BRAVE KNIGHTS ARE YOUR KINSMEN!

KHERUBIM FOOL!

IF YOU FEEL SUCH A CLOSE BOND WITH THESE PITIFUL CREATURES, THEN PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO *JOIN* THEM IN *DEATH!*

ENTROPY!

SLASH

GWYNITH! NO!

HACK!

YEEEARRGH!

EVEN AS THE SWORD OF POWER SUCKED THE LIFE FORCE FROM OUT OF YOUR RAVAGED BODY, YOU STILL REFUSED TO STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST THE INFERNAL BEAST.

IN THE END, I KNEW THERE WAS ONLY **ONE** WAY TO STOP HER.

FORGIVE ME, GWYNITH.

GUUURGH!

SMASH

EMP! WHA...WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*

WHAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE *COURAGE* TO DO YOURSELF!

HOW *COULD* YOU?! SHE WAS MY... *WIFE!*

BECAUSE YOU LEFT ME NO CHOICE!

IN YOUR GRIEF, YOU SWORE VENGEANCE AGAINST ME FOR WHAT I'D DONE, BUT IN YOUR OWN HEART, YOU KNEW THERE WAS ONLY **YOURSELF** TO BLAME!

NO...

IT... CAN'T BE... I --

LET HER DOWN WHEN SHE NEEDED YOU THE MOST, ENTROPY!

THAT'S THE TRUTH YOU JUST CAN'T *ACCEPT.*

IN TAKING *HER* LIFE, I SAVED *YOUR* OWN!

I GUESS THAT WAS *MY* MISTAKE THAT DAY --

AAARRRGH!

LIES! YOU'RE TRYING TO TRICK ME WITH YOUR *LIES!*

YOU TOOK HER LIFE, EMP, AND NOW I SHALL HAVE *YOURS!*

FEEL THE *TRUE MEASURE* OF MY POWER AND WRATH!

ULTRAMAT

YEEEARRGH!

VNNNNNNNNNNNNNN

TAKE HEED, ENTROPY! ALL YOUR VALINTED POWER IS BUT A *FRACTION* OF MY OWN!

STAND ASIDE, VILLAIN. WE HAVE COME TO SECURE THE SAFE RETURN OF OUR FRIENDS FROM YOUR DOMAIN.

I'D *LISTEN* TO HER IF I WERE YOU, SCARFACE. THE LADY MEANS BUSINESS.

YOU THINK HE'S GOING TO CALL VOID'S BLUFF, ZEALOT?

FOR OUR SAKE, I HOPE NOT, MY FRIEND. IF THIS MAN INDEED WIELDS THE POWER OF AN ORB, AS VOID HAS WARNED, HE MAY PROVE TO BE A DANGEROUS FOE.

MOST IMPRESSIVE, FEMALE!

I SENSE THAT *YOU*, LIKE MYSELF, ARE BONDED TO A MYSTICAL STONE!

BUT IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN *ONE BLOW* FROM EVEN *YOU* TO DEFEAT A *LORD KHERUBIM!*

HE'S USING THE ORB!
WATCH OUT, VOID!
STILL TOO WEAK!
SHIELD COLLAPS-
AAIEEEEEE!
ADRIANNA!
WHZZZRRT
YOU HURT VOID, TIN-FACE!
ZEALOT AND I ARE GONNA PUT YOU IN A SQUEEZE PLAY THAT'LL POP THAT PLATE RIGHT OFF YOUR HEAD!
I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE ABOUT THAT!
FOR I AM *LORD ENTROPY*, THE *MASTER* OF *CHAOS!*
HEY!
UNNGH!
WHUMP
ALL YOUR VAUNTED ABILITIES AND FIGHTING SKILLS MEAN *NOTHING* TO ONE WHO CAN DEFY THE LAWS OF NATURE AND PROBABILITY AND MAKE THE VERY GROUND YOU WALK ON *HURL* YOU *AWAY!*
YEEEAARGH!
SKRAASH
YOU'RE GOOD, CHROME DOME! BUT I'M *BETTER!*
WARBLADE'S THE NAME AND *PAIN'S* THE GAME. RULES ARE SIMPLE -- I TAKE MY BEST SHOTS AND WE SEE JUST HOW MANY YOU CAN *TAKE.*
OF COURSE, YOU CAN ALWAYS GIVE UP.

SURRENDER TO AN ANIMAL LIKE YOU?

I WOULD RATHER *DIE!*

THAT CAN BE ARRANGED!

PERHAPS NOT AS *EASILY* AS YOU'D LIKE.

NOOOO!

KLZZAKT

TELL ME, WARBLADE -- HOW DOES YOUR BODY *FEEL* AFTER IT'S BEEN STRETCHED TO ITS OUTER LIMITS...

...AND BEYOND...

...THE POINT OF NO RETURN?

UMMMM NGH!

I'LL STOP YOU, MONSTER! EVEN IF IT MEANS WIPING OUT YOUR MIND!

EERRGH!

IT WOULD SEEM I UNDERESTIMATED YOUR COURAGE, FEMALE.

BUT YOUR LIMITED PSIONIC POWERS ARE NO MATCH FOR MY OWN!

NEVERTHELESS, YOUR LIFE FORCE WILL PROVE QUITE *USEFUL!*

THWACK

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IN ORDER TO DEFEAT THE OTHERS, I'LL NEED TO *RECHARGE* MY STONE OF POWER --

--YOUR *DEATH* SHALL BRING ME *LIFE* AND *VICTORY!*

BUT SURELY, MY LOVE, YOU WOULDN'T LET ME DIE *AGAIN*, WOULD YOU?

GWYNITH?

IS IT REALLY *YOU*?

HAVE YOU COME *BACK* TO ME, MY LOVE?

WHA-AAARRGH!

KRRK

ACTUALLY, IT'S JUST *ME* USING MY "LIMITED" PSIONIC POWERS TO BUY A LITTLE TIME.

HOPE THERE ARE NO HARD FEELINGS, LOVER-BOY.

THAT... *HURT!*

BUT THERE SHOULD BE NO ONE *CAPABLE* OF SUCH POWER!

GUESS *AGAIN*, JERK.

WHOOSH

YOU SEE, ENTROPY, THE POWER HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN WITHIN ME. I JUST WASN'T ABLE TO TAP INTO IT BEFORE.

WITH VOID'S HELP, THOUGH, I CAN CHANNEL MY INTERNAL ENERGIES AND USE THEM TO DEVASTATING EFFECT.

NEAT TRICK, HUH?

THIS... THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING! NOT AFTER I'VE COME SO FAR!

I CAN'T BE DENIED MY VENGEANCE!

YYAAAAAAA

I CAN'T... CAN'T...

WATCH YOUR HEADS, EVERYONE! THE PLACE IS FALLING APART!

WHAT'S CAUSING IT, MAUL?

I'D SAY OUR HOST IS LOSING CONTROL OF THE BATTLE AS WELL AS HIS HOME.

IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH HE DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY TO DEAL WITH BOTH OF THEM AT THE SAME TIME.

IN WHICH CASE, THE SOONER WE GET OUT OF HERE, THE BETTER!

BUT WHAT ABOUT ENTROPY?! HE COULD STILL COME AFTER US!

ALL OF YOU, GET TO THE SHIP! ADRIANNA AND I WILL MAKE SURE ENTROPY STAYS DOWN TILL YOU'RE CLEAR!

uhh... NEVERMIND.

KRAAH

NOOOO!

WHOOK

RRRUMMBLE

LET'S *MOVE* IT, FOLKS, OR WE'RE GOING TO END UP PERMANENT FIXTURES IN THIS CRYSTAL PALACE.

NOW *THERE'S* A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT. MIRV PREPPED AND READY TO GO.

JULES, DID YOU FIND THE OTHER PASSENGERS?

I ONLY MANAGED TO FREE TWENTY OF THEM, SPARTAN. THE REST WERE TOO DEEPLY EMBEDDED WITHIN THE CRYSTALLINE WALLS--

--AND THE WHOLE PLACE STARTED SHAKING WHEN I GOT THE FIRST ONES OUT.

ARE WE GOING TO TRY AND GET THE OTHERS?

THERE'S NO TIME, JULES -- IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE FOR THEM! WE HAVE TO LEAVE NOW --

-- OR END UP AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN WITH THE REST OF THIS PLACE.

KABOOOOOOOM

VSSSSH

WAY TO GO, LADIES! YOU GOT US OUTTA THERE JUST IN TIME! GLAD WE BROUGHT YOU ALONG AFTER ALL, JULES.

THINK NOTHING OF IT, RENO.

LISTEN UP, PEOPLE! YOU ALL DID A GREAT JOB, ESPECIALLY THE WAY YOU STUCK TOGETHER AS A TEAM. I'M PROUD OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.

ANYWAY, I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS CARIBBEAN VACATION. IT'S TIME TO GO HOME.

JACOB MARLOWE'S FIFTH AVENUE PENTHOUSE APARTMENT, LATER THAT DAY...

WHAT'S WRONG, JACOB? YOU SEEM TROUBLED.

I GUESS AFTER FACING ENTROPY, I'VE COME TO REALIZE THERE'S STILL SO MUCH I DON'T KNOW ABOUT MYSELF... ABOUT MY PAST

IT NEVER REALLY BOTHERED ME UNTIL NOW.

I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF I'M DOING... THE RIGHT THING... WITH MY LIFE... HALO... OR THE WILDC.A.T.S, FOR THAT MATTER.

I'M JUST THINKING I NEED TO TAKE SOME TIME AWAY FROM IT ALL AND FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF.

THIS IS YOUR *DESTINY*, JACOB.

LORD ENTROPY WAS A LOST AND TORMENTED SOUL CONSUMED BY THE DARK POWERS OF THE ORB.

THE TWO OF YOU HAD NOTHING IN COMMON.

AS I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, YOU ARE MANKIND'S GREATEST CHAMPION.

HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE ABOUT THAT, ADRIANNA? I MEAN, ENTROPY WAS A LORD KHERUBIM, JUST LIKE ME, AND LOOK AT THE WAY HE TURNED OUT. AM I REALLY THAT DIFFERENT FROM HIM?

THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, ADRIANNA.

ENTROPY'S... MY BROTHER.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL?

NO -- I'VE MADE MY DECISION. FROM TOMORROW, ADRIANNA, YOU AND SPARTAN WILL LEAD THE WILDC.A.T.S.

I'M OUT.

THEY SAY EVERYBODY'S GOT A HOBBY. RESTORING OLD CARS, COLLECTING STAMPS OR COINS OR THIMBLES. I COLLECT DAEMONITES.

DEXTER! OPEN UP!

2x

DAVE W. BAITZ

KILROY WAS HERE

'COURSE, I DOUBT MANY THIMBLE COLLECTORS FIND THEMSELVES IN DIVES LIKE THIS...

...OR CAN GO THROUGH LOCKED DOORS THIS WAY. KICKING THEM DOWN IS SO TV.

AND NOISY BESIDES.

YOU IN HERE, DEXTER?

GUESS NOT.

WHAT A DUMP. REMINDS ME OF A CHEAP HOTEL I STAYED IN ONCE, NEXT TO THE BUS STATION IN TRENTON. GOOD THING EMP'S PAYING THE BILLS THESE DAYS.

HE'D FREAK IF HE KNEW HOW I WAS SPENDING MY TIME OFF, THOUGH.

daddy?

WHO--?

NO TIME FOR SUBTLETY NOW!

KRAASHH!

:snif:

AHHH, LET ME GUESS. YOU'RE NOT DEXTER, RIGHT?

WHERE IS HE, KID? DID YOUR DAD TAKE OFF AND LEAVE YOU ALL ALONE?

GUESS I'VE GOT SOME TIME TO KILL. YOU WANT TO WAIT TOGETHER?

...ME, I WAS AN ORPHAN. YOUR DAD MAY BE A LOWLIFE LOSER DIRTBAG, BUT AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT ONE.

mmbf

24

CHNNK

SOUNDS LIKE DADDY'S HOME.

I THINK MAYBE YOU SHOULD STAY IN HERE, OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE.

ulp

HOME, SWEET HOME. ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DOLLAR.

ONE OF THESE DAYS, I'M GONNA HANG SOME'A THEM SAMPLERS UP, JUST LIKE MA USED TO--

HUH? THOUGHT I TURNED--

COME ON IN, DEXTER. MAKE YOURSELF AT *HOME*.

I ALMOST HATE TO BRING THIS UP, MISTER, BUT THIS IS MY PAD. THERE SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?

JUST ANSWER SOME *QUESTIONS*, DEXTER.

I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN DOING SOME JOBS FOR A GUY NAMED SHARKEY. THE THING IS, SHARKEY'S NOT *REALLY* SHARKEY. THERE'S BEEN A *DAEMONITE* USING SHARKEY'S WORTHLESS BODY.

I'D HELP YOU IF I COULD, MAN, BUT I DON'T EVEN KNOW--

I *FOUND* SHARKEY TODAY. HE'S *DEAD*. THE DAEMONITE'S GONE. I *WANT* THAT DAEMONITE, AND YOU'RE GOING TO *GIVE* HIM TO ME.

YEAH?

THE ONLY THING I'M GIVIN' YOU IS A PERFORATED FACE, MISTER!

YOU'RE LUCKY I WANT YOU ALIVE, DEXTER.

'CAUSE IF I DIDN'T...

SWISSHH!

AARRGH!

...I'D BE USING SHARP EDGES!

BUT IF YOU WERE LITTLE BLOODY *SMEARS* ALL OVER THE *WALLS*, YOU COULDN'T TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO *KNOW*.

UNNHH!

WHICH IS WHAT YOU'RE *GOING* TO DO, AND IT'S GOING TO BE *NOW*!

THUMP!

OTHERWISE I'LL *WIPE* THE FLOORS WITH YOU! AND WHEN I'M DONE, I'LL TURN THE PIECES OVER TO THE *COPS*, ALONG WITH EVIDENCE OF THOSE *NINE* PEOPLE YOU *WHACKED* FOR SHARKEY!

OR MAYBE NOT, WARBLADE!

THONK!

urph!

THAT HURT... YOUR SKULL'S HARDER THAN I EXPECTED...

YOU BOUGHT YOURSELF A WORLD OF HURT, MISTER! AND I'M YOUR NATIVE GUIDE!

KRACK

OOOF!

I'M AMAZED AT THIS PUNK'S STRENGTH.

ONLY THING IS, I CAN'T DECIDE WHETHER TO BLOW OUT YOUR KNEES, OR MAYBE SEVER YOUR SPINE. LEAVE YOU LYING AROUND HELPLESS FOR A FEW DAYS BEFORE YOU DIE.

MAYBE I'LL JUST DO BOTH.

FAVORS LIKE THAT, I DON'T NEED.

SUITCASE SEEMS HEAVY... MAYBE HEAVY ENOUGH FOR--

FWIPP!

THIS!

C'MON, WARBLADE. YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT, CAN'T YOU?

THAT'S A LOT OF DOUGH. MORE THAN ANYBODY'D TRUST A PUNK LIKE DEXTER WITH. ESPECIALLY A DAEMONITE.

A DAEMONITE WOULDN'T TRUST HIS OWN MOTHER WITH A SUBWAY TOKEN. WHICH TELLS ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW...

...THE DAEMONITE IS IN DEXTER!

YOU LOOK LIKE MAYBE YOU HAVE THINGS FIGURED OUT, GIFTED ONE.

YOU MAY EVEN BE RIGHT.

BUT YOU WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!

PRETTY BRAVE TALK COMING FROM A DAEMONITE.

TOOK A WHOLE PACK OF YOU TO KILL MY PARENTS!

THWOCK!

HA-HA

THE GREAT WARBLADE! SO TERRIFIED, YOU CAN'T EVEN AIM!

WRONG, PARTNER! I NEVER MISS MY TARGET!

SHWIIIP!

I JUST ALWAYS WANTED TO TRY THIS RUG-YANKING TRICK. WORKS LIKE A CHARM!

KER-RASSH!

BRAAAP!

AAAAGHHH!

OUCH.

THAT LOOKS **REALLY** PAINFUL.

I'LL HAVE TO FEEL **SORRY** FOR HIM IN MY NEXT LIFE.

BUT RIGHT NOW, I'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE HE'S **FINISHED**...

...BEFORE THE **DAEMONITE** ESCAPES INTO ANOTHER HOST BODY.

THIS'LL ONLY HURT FOR THE REST OF YOUR **LIFE**. BUT THAT'LL BE A **SHORT**--HUH?

IT'S THE KID. **NUTS!** CAN I DO THIS IN FRONT OF HIM WITHOUT **BEING** JUST AS BAD AS THE **DAEMONITES?**

MAYBE I CAN **CONTAIN** THE DAEMONITE WITHOUT HURTING **DEXTER**--

DAMN THESE **FRAIL** HUMAN FORMS!

DON'T TRY IT, DEX!

ZING!

BRAAAAAAPP!

UNNGH!

THIS BODY MAY BE DONE FOR, GIFTED ONE, BUT IT'S TAKIN' YOU DOWN WITH IT!

YOU DIDN'T LEAVE ME ANY CHOICE, DEXTER. I FEEL BAD ABOUT THAT.

IF YOU'VE HURT THAT KID, DEXTER...

WELL, NEVER MIND.

AT LEAST THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO THAT'LL MAKE ME HATE MYSELF AS MUCH AS I DO DAEMONITES.

HALO, INC.
LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Sandra Wilson, esq.

...THIS ENTIRE SITUATION IS MOST *IRREGULAR*, MR. BRYCE, AS I'M SURE YOU CAN APPRECIATE.

DEFINITELY, MS. WILSON. IF I HAD *ANY-WHERE* ELSE TO TURN...

I UNDERSTAND, MR. BRYCE. SOMETIMES MR. MARLOWE'S ASSOCIATES FIND THEMSELVES IN ... SHALL WE SAY... *UNUSUAL* CIRCUMSTANCES.

RIGHT.

ALL I WANT IS TO BE SURE THE KID GETS A HOME. A *GOOD* HOME, WITH A REAL *FAMILY*.

THERE'S SOME *MONEY* HERE. IT SHOULD HELP TAKE CARE OF ANY EXPENSES THAT MIGHT COME UP.

YOU'RE A GOOD LITTLE GUY. I THINK I'M GOING TO MISS-- *HEY!*

Pok

A FAST LEARNER, TOO. MAYBE HE'LL FIND A BETTER TEACHER SOMEDAY.

AT LEAST NOW HE'S GOT A FIGHTING CHANCE.

-FIN-

ZONE